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HELPFUL HINTS IN CLEANING FLOOD-DAMAGED HOMES

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Here are some helpful aids for those who have had flood water in their homes.

Furniture of all kinds should be dried out thoroughly, as soon as possible. But this doesn't mean that one would set it in the sun. Sun bleaches wood, leather, plastic and all fabrics.

If the legs of furniture has been in water, they will need refinishing. Families will not do this type of clean-up work immediately because it is a long hard job. However, agents will want to provide information on refinishing so families will be encouraged to restore the furniture that has been in flood water.

Floors will need to be refinished. Electric sanders may be rented and the family can do the sanding if they take care in keeping floors level. The penetrating seal is an excellent finish for floors.

Rugs

1. Make a soap jelly by dissolving 1 part of mild soap flakes in 5 parts of hot water and letting the mixture stand until cool.
2. Thoroughly clean the rug with a vacuum cleaner. Clean the rug on the back as well as on the right side.
3. Take out any grease spots with carbon tetrachloride, using a soft brush.
4. Partly fill a bowl with the soap jelly, and beat it with an egg beater to a stiff lather like beaten egg whites or until it will stand alone. Fill two large pails or pans with warm water. Use plenty of lather
on the brush and scrub the rug gently, using a circular motion. Clean about a nine-inch space at a time and overlap the spaces. With a clean cloth dipped in the first pan of water and then wrung out, wipe all the lather from the rug. Wiring a second cloth dipped in the second pan of water and wipe the rug again, rubbing the nap in the same direction.

Continue the cleaning in this way, overlapping the strokes and spaces to prevent streaking. Get clean water when the water in the pans become dirty and soapy. Caution: Do not let the back of the rug become wet. Be sure that all of the soap is rinsed off.

5. When the cleaning is finished, lay the rug on the floor, rinse the brush in clean water, and brush the nap in one direction. The rug should dry quickly. Large rugs may be dried on the floor in the house with the windows open or on a porch floor. Small rugs may be hung on a line in the shade to dry.

6. Be sure the floor is dried thoroughly before clean rugs are replaced.

**Upholstered Furniture**

Use the same method as for cleaning rugs to clean the upholstery on furniture.

First remove all dust with a whisk broom or an attachment of a vacuum cleaner.

Scrub any greasy spots with carbon tetrachloride and a soft brush.

Follow number 5 under directions for cleaning a rug. If the springs on the chair are rusty and are located so that they can be reached easily, rub them with crude oil or kerosene.

**Sizing Rugs**

Rugs often become flimsy. Resizing can be done at home at a considerable saving. Buy either powdered or flaked glue at the drug store. One pound glue in one gallon of water will size a 9' x 12' rug. Pour half the water (cold) on glue and allow to stand several hours. Heat remaining water to boiling pour into glue solution
and stir until smooth. It may be necessary to heat it slightly to get it thoroughly dissolved.

Place rug face down and apply solution with a stiff scrubbing brush. Leave in place until thoroughly dry. It is easier to size small rugs if they are tacked in place, but with large ones it is not necessary if sizing is done inside, slip newspapers under edge of rug to protect floor.

**Leather Surface**

Upholstery-leather cleaning is similar to that for fabric surfaces. Use a thick suds of mild, neutral soap with as little water as possible; wipe off all traces of soap with a damp cloth; then dry and polish the surface with a soft, dry cloth. Saddle soap is good to use for cleaning leather. Never use furniture polish, furniture oils, or varnish on leather. Many of these preparations contain solvents that may soften the finish on upholstery leather and cause it to become sticky. A special commercial leather cleaner and preservative is made of water, wax, and alcohol in a thin solution.

Book bindings may be preserved by working animal or vegetable oils (such as lanolin or castor oil) into them with the hands, especially along the back bindings. Mineral oil must never be used on book bindings.

Neat's-foot oil helps to keep leather soft and preserve it from water or stains.

**Floors, Woodwork and Doors**

The accumulation of mud, dirt and water after a flood will probably leave the floors badly buckled. Do not attempt to repair the floors until they have had an opportunity to become thoroughly dry. Allowing enough time after a flood for the wood, walls and furnishings to dry is probably the most important point to remember in home painting, papering, refinishing and repair. Two months should be allowed for adequate drying before extensive repair is done.
Scrub all woodwork with a stiff fiber brush and plenty of water, to remove the silt in corners, cracks, and crevices before the house is dried out. A 5 to 10% solution of borax and water or a small amount of kerosene may be added to the water.

**Flood Reminders -- House and Furnishings**

Cleaning house is a hard task after a flood has entered it. Those experienced in this type of cleaning say that it is best to start sweeping the silt out of the house as the water recedes, if that is possible. Otherwise rugs and floors will be extra hard to clean and much scrubbing will need to be done.

Rugs, felt base floor coverings, and linoleums not glued to the floor can be scrubbed or washed, and hung out to dry. Or they may be rolled loosely and turned often to aid in their drying. Rubber and asphalt tiles and linoleums which are glued to the floor may buckle. If water remains between the floor and the floor covering, it may be necessary to slash the linoleum in the places where it has buckled, or to remove the loose pieces of tile, until the water has evaporated. Then the covering may be reglued in place.

Silica gels, obtainable from stores which handle supplies from chemical companies, are excellent materials to use to absorb excess moisture from rooms, storage closets, chests of drawers, and trunks.

**Walls and Wallpaper**

Do not attempt to wash damp plaster; it should not be rubbed or cleaned until it is bone dry. Then it may be rubbed uniformly and lightly with a good wallpaper cleaner. With care, plaster may be wiped with a slightly damp cloth and dried immediately. Leave badly stained walls for treatment when final re-decorating is to be done.

Small sections of wallpaper may be replaced with a good paperhanger's paste or with a paste made of mixing 2 lbs. of wheat flour to a smooth batter with
luke warm water and adding gradually enough boiling water to cook the paste and turn it into a roughly mass. When it is turned slightly darker, it is cooked. When the paste becomes stiff, add a little cold water, stir until smooth, and set away to cool. Thin it to working consistency with cold water just before using.

To remove mold on wallpaper caused by dampness, coat the spots with a solution of 1 part salicylic acid and 4 parts grain alcohol, applying with a soft brush. To remove grease spots, try covering them with a paste of French chalk. Apply with a soft brush and remove when dry with a sharp knife.

Furniture

Take all furniture outdoors and remove as many of the drawers, slides, or other working parts as possible. These will probably be stuck tight. Remove the back by cutting it out if necessary and push out the drawers. After the various moving parts of the furniture have been removed in this way, clean off all mud and dirt, using a hose stream if necessary, and then take them all indoors again and store them disassembled where they will dry out slowly. Do not leave them out in the sun. This will warp them and twist them out of shape.

Some of your furniture, especially that made of solid wood, may be salvaged by regluing. Gluing, however, is a fairly difficult job to do at home because on many places it is necessary to use clamps. If you find the work too difficult to attempt, consult an expert cabinetmaker about it.

Some of your furniture on the upper floors of your house may not have been submerged, but may only have become damp because of the water below. In such cases the varnished surface may have developed white spots or a scum caused by dampness. Such defects may be removed by rubbing the surface lightly with a piece of flannel dampened with spirits of camphor or essence of peppermint,
and after a few minutes, applying furniture polish. A drop or two of ammonia on a damp cloth may be used in place of the camphor or peppermint. If the spots cannot be removed in this way, it will probably be necessary to refinish the furniture.

Clean metal as soon as practicable, especially if it has an iron base which is likely to rust badly. Rust on iron can be wiped off readily with a rag saturated with kerosene. Then lightly coat iron hardware with petrolatum or machine oil. Wash pots and pans with soapy water to remove the kerosene, and then coat with leaf lard heated on the stove or in the oven, wipe, and put away. Clean brass and copper with a pomade or special polish; then wash it with warm, soapy water and dry it thoroughly.